

Secretary Arne Duncan Delivers Keynote Address to FFA Convention

"Agricultural education is central to the future of American prosperity," Secretary of Education Arne Duncan told an audience of 14,000 students and educators at the annual National FFA Convention on Oct. 21 in Indianapolis. His message was simple: "We need you. Our nation needs your skills and talents to compete and prosper in the global economy." He pointed out that agriculture is the biggest employer in the nation. Approximately 21 million Americans, or 20 percent of the U.S. workforce, work in the agricultural sector. For the U.S. economy to continue to rebound and grow, America's biggest employer has to help lead the way.

The three challenges Duncan cited to agricultural education were:

- While agricultural education is expanding, all agricultural education should be rigorous and relevant. It should systematically prepare students for high-growth careers through partnerships with K–12 schools, higher education, and employers;
- The tremendous potential for high-quality distance learning has yet to be truly tapped. Only about one in five schools in small towns and rural areas offers distance-learning courses through satellite, television, or the Internet; and
- Agricultural education programs and many rural schools face chronic teacher shortages, especially in hard-to-serve subject areas.

"We want to support states and districts seeking to expand and replicate successful rural educator and grow-you-own teacher preparation programs in partnership with community colleges and schools of education," Secretary Duncan emphasized.

Look here for the [text of the Secretary's remarks and photos from the Convention](#).

NTIA Invests \$3.3M in Digital Literacy for Adult Learners

The National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) recently invested \$3.3 million available under the *American Recovery and Reinvestment Act* in a [Learner Web Partnership](#) project supporting digital literacy and other training tailored to adult learners. The new project will provide tutor-facilitated training in English and Spanish to about 23,000 adults from economically vulnerable populations to help them participate in an increasingly digital society and economy. The grant was awarded to Portland State University in Oregon, which will partner with adult literacy and basic education organizations in California, Louisiana, Minnesota, New York, and Texas. The project uses an approach that combines self-paced learning via [Learner Web](#) with live, on-site tutorial support in about 75 computer labs. The program will teach digital literacy, provide consumer education about local broadband access and offer information on local career pathway programs. Instructional activities include use of broadband for conducting job searches, finding educational and health information, and using smart consumer practices. The partnership plans a targeted outreach campaign to increase awareness of its training programs among under-served populations. Funds flow through the existing [Broadband Technology Opportunities Program \(BTOP\)](#), which supports deployment of broadband infrastructure, public computer centers, and sustainable adoption of broadband service. More information is available from Steve Reder at reders@pdx.edu.

U.S. Department of Education Convenes Committee on Measures of Student Success

The first meeting of the [Department's Committee on Measures of Student Success](#) was held on Oct. 20 in Washington, D. C. Created under the [Higher Education Opportunity Act](#), the committee will develop recommendations for two-year degree-granting institutions of higher education to comply with the law's graduation and completion rate disclosure requirements. The committee will also develop recommendations regarding additional or alternate measures of student success that are comparable alternatives to the completion or graduation rates, taking into account the mission and role of two-year degree-granting higher education institutions. The committee members include experts in the field of higher education policy, state higher education officials, students, and other stakeholders in the higher education community. The committee is chaired by Thomas Bailey of Columbia University's National Center for Postsecondary Education Research and director of the Community College Research Center.